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Ministry of Agriculture and Lands

TWO FIRST NATIONS JOIN HISTORIC CLEARINGHOUSE PROJECT

COMOX – As a demonstration of the Province's commitment to the New Relationship and the success of the Nanwakolas Clearinghouse pilot project, a First Nations referral process similar to FrontCounter BC, the Kwakiutl and We Wai Kai First Nations have joined the Nanwakolas Clearinghouse, Agriculture and Lands Minister Stan Hagen and Nanwakolas Council President Dallas Smith announced today.

"The Nanwakolas Clearinghouse has proven itself to be an effective means for First Nations to respond to provincial referrals on land use applications," said Hagen. "I'd like to thank the Chiefs and president of the Nanwakolas Council for their leadership and vision which have been key to making the clearinghouse project a success."

The Nanwakolas Clearinghouse acts as a single window for First Nations referrals related to natural resource applications in the Nanwakolas Council's territories. Input from the appropriate First Nations is collected, consolidated and provided to the Province. Resource agencies annually send hundreds of application referral letters for use of Crown land and resources to members of the Nanwakolas Council. The applications often need to be reviewed by three to four different member First Nations. The existing members of clearinghouse are the Mamalilikulla-Qwe'Qwa'Sot'Em, Tlowitsis, Da'naxda'xw Awaetlatla, Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw, Kwiakah, and K'ómoks First Nations. Today the Kwakiutl and We Wai Kai joined.

"Today marks an important milestone in the development of the Nanwakolas Clearinghouse," said Smith. "The clearinghouse process provides our Council the staff and funding capacity we need in order to respond to queries from the Province in a timely fashion. With the added participation of the Kwakiutl and We Wai Kai First Nations, more members of our community, and the Province, will benefit from the clearinghouse process."

In addition to the participation of two more First Nations, the original Nanwakolas Clearinghouse Pilot Project Framework Agreement has been amended to include the tenure replacements, assignment referrals, and Ministry of Environment water stewardship tenures. Opportunities for expansion of member First Nations and provincial agencies will continue to be explored.

"The clearinghouse upholds the spirit and intent of the New Relationship and I look forward to the strengthening of ties between the Province and First Nations," said Michael de Jong, Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation. "I am confident that the clearinghouse model will help provide clear direction for the Province's efforts towards reconciliation with the First Nations."

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The original agreement was signed on May 8, 2007 by seven First Nations and the Ministries of Environment, Tourism, Culture and the Arts, and Agriculture and Lands. The pilot project emerged as a result of the Central Coast Land and Coastal Resource Management Plan and the desire of both First Nations and the Province to coordinate and improve the efficiency of resource decision making.

Recently, discussions with the Nanwakolas Council have been initiated to evaluate the potential to extend the agreement beyond the three year pilot. The Nanwakolas Council and the Province celebrated today's historic achievement with a signing ceremony that included First Nations singing and dancing.

The agreement and related map are available at http://ilmbwww.gov.bc.ca/news.html.

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